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CLAIMS

1. A method of on-line processing of applications for admission to institutions, the applications requiring as attachments documents obtainable from third parties, comprising:
  - transmitting over a computer network to an applicant an application form to complete;
  - receiving over the computer network from the applicant a completed application;
  - automatically transmitting to a third party via facsimile a request for a document to be associated with the application;
  - receiving from the third party as facsimile data the document along with machine readable identifying information indicating the application to which the document is to be associated; and
  - automatically determining from the facsimile data the identifying information and associating the facsimile data with the application, whereby the third party uses only a facsimile transmission device to transmit the document in electronic form and the machine readable identifying information facilitates automatic matching of the document with the application at the institution.

2. The method of claim 1 in which:

- automatically transmitting to a third party via facsimile a request for a document to be attached to the application includes transmitting a return facsimile cover sheet to be used with the return transmission; and

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returning via facsimile the document along with machine readable identifying information includes transmitting the return facsimile cover sheet.

3. The method of claim 2 in which the return facsimile cover sheet includes identifying information in the form a bar code.

4. The method of claim 2 in which the return facsimile cover sheet includes identifying information in the form of recognizable alphanumeric characters.

5. The method of claim 1 in which the document comprises a transcript.

6. The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the document in a file in electronic facsimile format in association with an applicant, the file being available for subsequent applications completed by the applicant.

7. The method of claim 1 in which automatically transmitting to a third party includes verifying that the third party has agreed to return the document via facsimile.

8. The method of claim 1 in which automatically transmitting to a third party includes verifying that the institution accepts electronic attachments to its applications.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising transmitting the application and the document to the institution.

10. The method of claim 9 in which the application and the document are transmitted together to the institution.

11. The method of claim 9 in which the application and the document are transmitted at different times to the institution and the identifying information is used to match the document with the application.

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12. An apparatus for processing electronic forms, the electronic forms requiring attachment of paper forms from third parties, comprising:

a server transmitting a form to an applicant for completion and for receiving the completed form posted by the applicant;

a facsimile transmission device for transmitting in accordance with an instruction from the server a request for a document to be attached to the form , the request including identifying information for associating the returned document with the form;

a facsimile receiving device for receiving the returned document and identifying information in facsimile format; and

an automatic interpreter for interpreting the identifying information and associating the document with a specific form received by the server.

13. The apparatus of claim 12 in which the server transmits the forms and the document to an institution.

14. The apparatus of claim 13 in which the server transmits the form to the institution after receiving the document.

15. The apparatus of claim 12 in which the interpreter includes a bar code interpreter.

16. The apparatus of claim 12 in which the interpreter includes an alphanumeric character recognition.

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17. A method of associating first information in electronic form from a first source with second information in printed form from a second source, the method comprising:

receiving the first information in electronic form over a computer network from the first source;

transmitting a request for the second information in printed form to the second source;

receiving the second information in electronic facsimile format from the second source, the second information including automatically interpretable identifying information;

automatically interpreting the identifying information; and

using the identifying information to automatically associate the printed information with the electronic information.

18. The method of claim 17 in which transmitting a request for the second information to the second source includes automatically transmitting a request via facsimile, the request including a return facsimile cover sheet including the automatically interpretable identifying information.

19. The method of claim 17 in which the automatically interpretable identifying information includes a bar code.

20. The method of claim 17 in which the automatically interpretable identifying information includes alphanumeric characters.

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21. The method of claim 17 in which the first information comprises an admissions application and the second information comprises a transcript.

22. The method of claim 17 in which receiving the first and second information is received by a third party servicer and further comprising transmitting the first and second information to an end user of the information.

23. The method of claim 17 further comprising transmitting the second information and a return facsimile cover sheet including the automatically interpretable identifying information in response to the request for the second information

24. The method of claim 17 in which transmitting a request for the second information includes determining whether the second source has agreed to transmit via facsimile the second information.